

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS
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S E C R E T RABAT 1299

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MASS MO
SUBJECT: COMMENTS OF MOROCCAN AIR FORCE CHIEF

1. IN CONVERSATION WITH CHIEF MUSLO ON MARCH 5, COLONEL KABBAJ, INSPECTOR OF MOROCCAN AIR FORCE, COMMENTED ON (A) MILITARY SITUATION VIS-A-VIS ALGIERS AND (B) STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE OF MOROCCO. HIS COMMENTS MAY REFLECT ROYAL ATTITUDES, PARTICULARLY ON STRATEGIC MATTERS. DETAILS FOLLOW.

2. MILITARY SITUATION. KABBAJ STATED THAT MOROCCO DID NOT PRESENTLY FEAR A LARGE SCALE ALGERIAN MILITARY ATTACK. THIS HAD BEEN SERIOUS WORRY UNTIL FEB. 28, WHICH MARKED END OF SPANISH ROLE IN SAHARA. KABBAJ GAVE ASSESSMENT THAT THERE WERE CURRENTLY VERY FEW POLISARIO GUERRILLAS OR ALGERIAN TROOPS LEFT IN SAHARA OR NORTHERN MAURITANIA. GUERRILLAS NEVERTHELESS REMAINED A PROBLEM, AS THEY MINGLED WITH LOCAL POPULATION BY DAY AND CARRIED OUT THEIR GUERRILLA ACTIVITIES UNDER COVER OF DARKNESS, MAKING DETECTION DIFFICULT.

3. KABBAJ ADDED THAT ALGERIAN AIR FORCE HAD NOT CAUSED MOROCCO ANY SEVERE PROBLEMS AS YET. ALGERIANS HAD FLOWN MISSIONS IN VICINITY OF ALGERIAN-SAHARAN BORDER, BUT MOROCCAN PILOTS HAD BEEN UNDER ORDERS TO AVOID COMBAT. ALGERIANS HAD FIRED SOME ANTI-AIRCRAFT MISSILES ACROSS SAHARA BORDER FROM TINDOUF AREA,

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KABBAJ INDICATED.

4. STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE OF MOROCCO. KABBAJ DWELLED AT LENGTH ON THEME THAT "WEST" (READ U.S.) DID NOT FULLY UNDERSTAND STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE OF MOROCCO. LEFTIST TAKEOVER IN MOROCCO WOULD BE SERIOUS BLOW TO WEST, HE STRESSED. HE WENT ON TO NOTE THAT SPAIN WAS RECEIVING VAST QUANTITIES OF U.S. AID, BUT IN RETURN WAS DOING VERY LITTLE FOR ITS FRIENDS. HE EXPRESSED VIEW THAT U.S. SHOULD DO MUCH MORE FOR MOROCCO, IN TERMS OF BOTH EQUIPMENT AND FUNDS, IN FUTURE. HE ALSO VOICED STRONG CONCERN OVER WHAT HE SAW AS U.S. INABILITY TO REACT QUICKLY IN URGENT SITUATIONS.

5. COMMENT: KABBAJ'S RECENT EXPERIENCE IN NEGOTIATING TRANSFER OF U.S. ARMS FROM IRAN AND JORDAN HAS NO DOUBT COLORED HIS THINKING ON SPEED WITH WHICH U.S. ABLE AND WILLING TO REACT TO URGENT MOROCCAN REQUESTS FOR EQUIPMENT VIEWED AS VITAL HERE.

6. AS DEPT. AWARE, KING HAS FOR SOME TIME BEEN FLOATING IDEA OF CLOSER AND FROADER RELATIONSHIP WITH THE U.S., INCLUDING INTENSIFIED MILITARY COOPERATION. KABBAJ'S COMMENTS ON STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE OF MOROCCO FIT IN WITH THIS IDEA, AS WELL AS HINTING AT THE QUID PRO QUO OF U.S. ECONOMIC AND MILITARY AID WHICH MIGHT BE INVOLVED. HIS REMARKS ABOUT U.S. AID TO SPAIN COULD ALSO BE AN INDICATION THAT MOROCCO FEELS IT IS NOT PRESENTLY RECEIVING LEVEL OF SUPPORT JUSTIFIED BY ALREADY EXISTING U.S. COMMUNICATIONS FACILITIES, NAVAL VISITS, AND OTHER BENEFITS TO U.S. WHILE IT IS NOT CLEAR WHETHER KABBAJ WAS PASSING ON A SIGNAL FROM HIGHER LEVEL, THIS POSSIBILITY MUST BE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT IN LIGHT OF HIS CLOSE RELATIONSHIP WITH KING, WHOSE BOEING HE PILOTED TO SAFETY DURING AUGUST 1972 AIRBORNE COUP ATTEMPT.
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